

Merkel Cell Carcinoma

May 2015

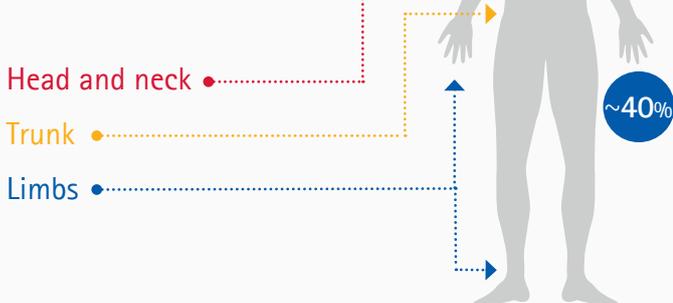
FACT SHEET

What is Merkel cell carcinoma?

Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC) is a rare and aggressive form of skin cancer.¹ In MCC, malignant cells form in the top layer of the skin, close to the nerve endings that sense touch.²

What are the symptoms?

MCC commonly appears as a painless bluish-red lump on the skin. MCC occurs most often on sun-exposed areas of the skin, such as the head, neck, arms and legs.^{1,3}



Risk factors^{2,4,5}

-  Exposure to an **excessive** amount of natural or artificial **sunlight**
-  A **weakened immune system** due to diseases such as HIV or chronic lymphocytic leukemia
-  **Taking medication** that suppresses the immune system (e.g. after an organ transplant)
-  A **history** of other types of cancer
-  **Older age** (≥ 50 years)
-  **Male gender**
-  **Fair skin**
-  Infection with the **Merkel cell polyomavirus**, present in approximately 80% of MCC tumors

Possible future options:

To learn about clinical trials in MCC, visit clinicaltrials.gov and search for 'Merkel cell carcinoma'.

Incidence

Each year there are approximately **1,500 new cases** of MCC diagnosed in the U.S.⁴ and **2,500 new cases** diagnosed in the E.U.⁶



Diagnosis and prognosis

Historically, diagnosis of MCC has been challenging. This is due to the low awareness of the condition and its similar appearance to other skin conditions, such as benign cysts or lesions, which can delay a correct diagnosis and appropriate treatment.¹

MCC has a significantly higher mortality rate than the more commonly known type of skin cancer, melanoma (33% versus 15%, within 5 years of diagnosis for all stages of disease).¹ In over one-third of patients, MCC will have spread to a local lymph node or other parts of the body by the time of diagnosis, meaning that the cancer has advanced to Stage III or IV.^{1,4}

With today's treatment options, mortality rates for patients with Stage IV metastatic MCC are approximately 8 out of 10 patients, within 5 years of diagnosis.^{1,4}



Current treatment options for MCC may include:^{7,8}

- Surgery
- Radiotherapy
- Chemotherapy

Need for further research

Due to the **poor prognosis** for patients with Stage III or IV MCC, there is a clear **unmet medical need** for new treatment options.

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References

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